



Congressman Jackson Receives Prestigious Minority Health Award

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From the Association of Minority Health Professions Schools:

On July 20th, the minority health professions community celebrated the recent elevation of the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities to the level of an institute at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The title sponsors of the congressional reception included the Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, Morehouse School of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, and Howard University Health Sciences. Also recognized at the widely attended event where Members of Congress instrumental in the institute's elevation: Sen. Arlen Specter, Sen. Ben Cardin, Rep. Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, and Del. Donna Christensen.

One of the honorees, Rep. Jackson previously said "the language we were fortunate to add to the health reform law provides the structure and authority to better address the deep and persistent health disparities that plague our nation's minority populations. The NIH now will have even stronger architecture and tools to help build healthier and stronger communities throughout the country."

In 2000, the NCMHD was created to promote minority health and coordinate the efforts of the NIH to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities. While making important strides, however, the center's structure generated ambiguities as responsibility and authority for minority health disparities research remain diffuse and spread throughout NIH. In addition, the NCMHD lacked authority over all NIH-supported health disparities activities and funds.

To address these concerns, Reps. Jackson and Cummings introduced H.R. 2778, which would have elevated the NCMHD, establishing the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Similar language, added to the health reform law, clarified the role of the Institute's Director as coordinator and manager of the NIH-wide minority health and health disparities portfolio. It also provided the new Institute with professional judgment over NIH-wide minority health and health disparities budgets as well as management over NIH-wide minority health and health disparities funding.

Congressman Jackson said, "I was pleased to lead the effort in the House to create the NCMHD ten year ago as well as to continue the momentum, take the next step, and elevate the NCMHD into an Institute. With greater authority and influence, this new Institute will better concentrate and drive our efforts to reduce and eliminate health disparities."

According to recent statistics:

- African Americans have death rates more than 40 percent higher than Whites for heart disease, seven times higher for HIV/AIDS, double for prostate cancer, and 30 percent higher for all cancers.
- Hispanics have death rates 41 percent higher than Whites for diabetes, three times higher for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, three times higher for HIV/AIDS and 18 percent higher for strokes.
- Native Americans and Alaskan Natives have death rates 750 percent higher than Whites for tuberculosis, 190 percent higher for diabetes, and 550 percent higher from alcoholism.